

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT PATNA

Civil Writ Jurisdiction Case No.5906 of 2022

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Udesh Rai S/o Suraj Rai Resident of Village- Baikatpur, Near Bamboo Tal
Chauraha, P.S.- Khusrupur, District- Patna.

... .. Petitioner/s

Versus

1. The State of Bihar through the Principal Secretary, Excise, Patna.
2. The District Magistrate, Patna.
3. The Excise Commissioner, Patna.
4. The Station House Officer, Khusrupur Station, District- Patna.
5. The Station House Officer, Singhaul Police Station, District Begusarai.

... .. Respondent/s

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Appearance :

For the Petitioner/s : Mr.Manoj Kumar Pandey
For the Respondent/s : Mr.Kumar Manish (Sc5)

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CORAM: HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE

and

HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE S. KUMAR

ORAL JUDGMENT

(Per: HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE S. KUMAR)

Date : 10-05-2022

Heard learned counsel for the parties.

Petitioner has prayed for the following relief(s):-

(I) For issuance of writ in the nature of mandamus commanding and directing the

respondents authority to release the vehicle No. BR-01GE/4759 bearing Registration No. Mahendra Bolero, Chassis No. MA1ZN2GHKF1E45136, Engine No. GHF1E31749 of the petitioner which was seized by the S.I. of Singhoul O.P., Police Station, District- Begusarai in Singhoul P.S. Case No 346/2021, dated 23-06-2021 was found loaded with huge quantity of wine registered u/s 120(b) of the I.P.C. and 30 A of the Bihar Prohibition Excise Act, 2018.

(II) For further direction to respondent authority to take final decision with regard to release the vehicle.

It is submitted on behalf of petitioner that he is the owner of the seized motorcycle which was stolen by unknown thieves on 10.05.2021 for which he has lodged FIR on 10.05.2021 giving rise to Khusrupur PS Case No. 131 of 2021 for the offence punishable under Section 379 of IPC, and same

was being used by the miscreants for transportation of illicit liquor and 1216.44 litre of illicit liquor was recovered from said stolen motorcycle giving rise to Muffasil (Singhaul O.P) P.S Case No. 346 of 2021 dated 29.06.2021 for the offence punishable under Section 30(a) of the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act, 2016.

Petitioner claims to be owner of the seized motorcycle and same was stolen on 10.05.2021 for which he had earlier instituted a case as such, petitioner cannot be held to be responsible for transportation of illicit liquor, however, since the vehicle was used for transportation of illicit liquor same is liable for confiscation.

In the facts and circumstances of the case, **District Magistrate/Confiscating officer concerned**, is directed to provisionally release the vehicle of petitioner after due identification of ownership of the vehicle which was stolen and subsequently recovered and seized by the police in excise case on production of ownership and registration papers with respect to vehicle in question in his name upon furnishing adequate sureties to the satisfaction of District Collector/Confiscating Authority.

The petitioner while submitting the sureties shall also

furnish the following affidavits/undertakings:

(i) That the petitioner shall not indulge in creating any third party right or interest in respect of the vehicle during the pendency of the confiscation proceeding and shall not alienate the vehicle during this period.

(ii) The petitioner shall furnish an undertaking to produce the vehicle before the confiscating authority as and when required.

(iii) Prior to release of the vehicle, a Panchanama would be prepared wherein the photograph of the vehicle shall be taken and will be certified by the petitioner and same shall be kept on record so that in future if so required, it may be used as a secondary evidence. The petitioner shall furnish an undertaking not to challenge the said Panchanama.

The release shall be allowed within a period of 14 days from the date of submission of the sureties and the undertakings as stated above, which would however be subject to finalization of the confiscation proceeding.

OR

It is submitted by learned counsel for the State that during pendency of writ petition, there has been amendment in the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Rules, 2021 and a new Rule 12(A) and 57(B) have been inserted which reads as under:-

“12. A. Release of Vehicles, Conveyance etc. on payment of Penalty:- (1) If any vehicles, conveyance, vessel, animal etc. has been seized by any police or excise officer under the Act, then in terms of section -57B(1) of the Act, the Collector or an officer authorized by him upon receipt of an application in Form IV by the owner of the said conveyance or vehicle

etc., may release the said conveyance or vehicle upon payment of such penalty as may be ordered by the Collector or the officer authorized by him.

Provided, where it is not possible to ascertain the owner of the vehicle or the owner is not coming to claim the vehicle, the Collector or the officer authorized by him, after waiting for 15 days from the date of seizure, shall proceed to confiscate and auction the vehicle as per the provisions of the Act.

(2) The penalty shall be 50% of the latest insured value of vehicle/conveyance. The insured value is the value of the vehicle as assessed by the insurance company. Where, the insured value is not available or the Collector or the officer authorized by him has reason to believe that the vehicle is undervalued, he shall get the valuation done by the District Transport Officer and 50% of that value shall be the amount of penalty.

In any case, the Collector shall not wait beyond 15 days from the date of seizure and if during this period, the accused/owner does not pay up the penalty, he shall proceed with the confiscation/auction.

(3) Notwithstanding above, if on a report by police officer or excise officer, the Collector or the officer authorized by him is satisfied that releasing the vehicle or conveyance shall not be in the public interest, he shall proceed ahead with the confiscation of the said vehicle or conveyance and its subsequent auction / disposal.

(4) Where the conveyance is such that its valuation / insurance is not possible, the Collector or the officer authorized by him shall impose such fine as he deems fit. While imposing such fine, the Collector or the officer authorized by him shall have due regard to the economic status of the individual, nature of his involvement in the crime and the quantum of intoxicant recovered.

(5) Such penalty shall be, regardless of the outcome of the trial if any, before the Special Court, non-refundable.

(6) The owner of the vehicle / conveyance shall, after the release of the vehicle / conveyance, produce the vehicle/ conveyance as and when required by the authorities.

[Explanation:- In all pending / ongoing cases of confiscation/auction of vehicles, the Collector or the officer authorized by him may give an opportunity to the existing owner to pay the aforesaid penalty and get the vehicle released. Upon satisfaction about ownership and upon payment of such penalty, the ongoing confiscation/auction proceeding may be dropped and the vehicle released.]

57B-Things or premises liable to be released upon penalty-

(1) Any animal, vehicle, vessel or other conveyance used for committing any offence punishable under this Act that has been seized by any police Officer or Excise Officer may be released by the Collector upon payment of such penalty as may be notified by the State Government.

(2) Any premises or part thereof used for committing any offence punishable under this Act that has been seized by any police Officer or Excise Officer may be released by the Collector upon payment of such penalty as may be notified by the State Government.

(3) If the person concerned does not pay the penalty, then the Collector shall proceed to confiscate the said animal, vehicle, vessel or other conveyance and premises as per section-58.

[Explanation 1: It shall not be a right of the accused to get his conveyance, item or premises released upon payment of the required penalty. The Collector, based upon a report by a police Officer or an Excise Officer, may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, still refuse to release

the said conveyance, item or premises and proceed ahead with confiscation and auction/destruction.]

[Explanation 2: The Collector shall, from the date of this Amendment coming into force, close the on-going confiscation proceeding if the person concerned pays the penalty as notified and release such vehicle, conveyance or premises.]

[Explanation 3: Such release shall not affect the outcome of trial, if any, before the Special Court.]”

In said view of the matter, the writ petition is disposed of with liberty to petitioner to avail the remedy of the amended provision of 12(A) and 57B of the Bihar Prohibition & Excise (Amendment) Rules, 2022. It is made clear that this Court has not expressed any opinion with respect to merit of the case.

With said observation and direction, this writ petition is disposed of.

(Sanjay Karol, CJ)

(S. Kumar, J)

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AFR/NAFR	NAFR
CAV DATE	NA
Uploading Date	
Transmission Date	NA